

Weekly Newsletter

December 29, 2024

Temple Tidings

First Presbyterian Church of Oakland

Making God's Welcome Known



A Modern Nativity
by Ross Wintle

W E L C O M E

Visitors:

- If you would like to be added to our email list, please go to firstchurchoakland.org and fill out the form at the bottom
- Need help hearing? Ushers can provide **hearing devices** to assist you.
- Please feel free to take the Sanctuary flowers home to enjoy after the service.

Visiting Parents:

- Ushers can guide you to the **nursery** for certified childcare for children age three years and younger.
- You may also make use of the **Parent Corners** at the rear sanctuary entrance or up front by the font.
- Children's **worship bags** are available in the narthex or from the ushers with worship play items.
- On the first Sunday of the month we celebrate **Family Worship & Communion** and children remain in worship.
- **Godly Play** is offered for children all other Sundays. Children are escorted to Classroom 2 during *Passing of the Peace* and rejoin their families during Fellowship Time.

O R D E R o f S E R V I C E

First Presbyterian Church of Oakland is a **More Light** faith family,
on a journey toward becoming the **Beloved Community**.

We welcome and affirm persons of every age,
national origin, racial and ethnic heritage, gender identity, sexual orientation,
socio-economic status, physical ability and spiritual leaning.

I N V I T A T I O N t o W O R S H I P

Prelude

Precious Lord

Welcome

Call to Worship

One: We gather this morning ready to listen.

All: Open our ears, Lord.

One: We gather this morning ready to learn.

All: Open our minds, Lord.

One: We gather this morning ready to love.

All: Open our hearts, Lord.

One: We gather this morning ready to worship.

All: Open our spirits to receive you, Lord.

One: We gather to praise the Lord Almighty!

Gathering Prayer

One: Holy one, as we gather today, may we be eager to learn and to minister to others.
Meet us here in this sacred space. May our hearts and minds be open to your call, as
we worship and praise your holy name.

All: Amen.

Please rise in body or spirit
Hymn

Go Tell It On the Mountain
African American Heritage Hymnal #202

CONFESSIO N o f SIN & ASSURANCE o f GRACE

One: God of love, we long to hear your voice but sometimes block our ears to the true words of love you speak into our lives. You offer words of love and acceptance, but we find reason to ignore them or withhold them from others. Be tolerant and forgive us in your love. For we yearn to find your perfect bond of unity in our relationships with one another and with the world.

All: Amen.

Silent Reflection

You are invited into a time of silent, personal reflection

One: In the name of the one who loves unconditionally, we pray.

All: Amen

Please rise in body or spirit

Assurance of Pardon

When you feel like no one understands, sit at Christ's feet. Ask the hard questions and listen for the answers. God will speak. You are not alone. You are loved.

Passing of the Peace of Christ

One: May the peace of Christ be with you.

All: And also with you.

One: Let us offer each other a sign of Christ's peace

Greet those around you with a sign of Christ's peace. Children may go with leaders to Godly Play.

P R A Y E R S o f t h e P E O P L E

Sharing of Joys & Concerns

You may share requests for prayer with the congregation aloud. If you would like, there are two tables set up with candles for prayer and salt water for lament.

Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Song

Love Divine, All Loves Excelling
Glory to God #366

THE WORD

Scripture Lesson

Colossians 3. 12 - 17. NRSV

Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

One: For the Word in Scripture, the Word made flesh and the Word in our hearts.

All: **Thanks be to God.**

Sermon

RESPONSE to the WORD

Sermon Continued

Lisa will lead the congregation in reflection on reading and sermon.

Song

We Are One in the Spirit (They'll Know We Are Christians)
Glory to God #300

Invitation to the Offering

With joy and faith, may we bring our gifts and our love before God in this time of offering.

Ushers will collect the weekly offering. Donations can be placed in the offering plate. You may also make a donation by using this QR code on your smart phone:



Offertory

Mary, Did You Know?

Prayer for the Offering

One: God of generosity, may your peace and your love seep into our hearts and our offerings, that we might become shining examples of your light in a hurting world. Thank you for your many gifts—this gift of community, the enthusiasm for learning, the power of generosity, and the gift of love. May our gifts and our very lives bring your blessing to the world.

All: Amen

SENDING OUT to be THE CHURCH

Invitation to Community Life

Please rise in body or spirit

Song

This Little Light of Mine
African American Heritage Hymnal #549

Benediction

SERVING in WORSHIP TODAY

Pastor: Lisa Justice

Liturgist: Maggie Harmon

Music Director: Jake Fontana

Guest Musician: Joe Warner

Song Leader: Linda Carter

Head Usher: Matthew Inadomi

Godly Play: Di Pagel and Aaron Ruff

Fellowship Time Refreshments: Judy Rowan and Charmaine Irmiter

Celebrating the Newest Member of the Edwell Family!



Living the Life Abundant!

by Maggie Harmon

It may sound trite but it is also true: so often how we see the world has more to do with what we are looking through than what we are looking at. We see through our own eyes, with the lenses of opinion and experience that we all individually carry. Living a life of abundance is as much about a choice we make in how to see the world as it is a quantifiable expression.

2024 for First Presbyterian was abundant. The numbers participating in communion have steadily grown, the faces we see in our ministries, in coffee hour, at community events are expanding, the voices we hear in worship are becoming louder.

As of November our giving income was up and our expenses were down. The facility income was sufficient to continue to save for the necessary repairs our aging building so often needs. We were able to provide Christmas bonuses to our staff for the second year in a row, and are

building a budget for 2025 that will expand our ministry and support the first church retreat in many years.

We are blessed in this abundance because of your generosity.

If you are able to give a little more we invite you to do so as we creatively imagine how much more we can do to serve, to welcome, to invite the blessings of an abundantly loving God into more lives in 2025.*

*gifts given online by 11:59pm on 12/31 or postmarked 12/31 are deductible for the 2024 calendar year; talk to your financial advisor about your particular circumstances.

Pastor Joel Leads Meditation Workshop Beginning January 12

Interested in deepening your faith by engaging in the spiritual discipline of mindful meditation? Meditation is well-known to us as a practice connected with yoga, Buddhism, Hinduism, and other religions from various parts of the world. Did you know that meditation is also an ancient practice of the early church, practiced throughout history by many monastic traditions, and perhaps less obvious currently practiced by many Christians.

Practitioners of mindful meditation report greater awareness of self and a deeper connection to others. In this four part series,

we will seek to explore how meditation can also bring us to a deeper awareness and connection with the Divine that resides within us. Our four week journey will include a consideration of the various ways meditation has been understood in various cultures and the history and meaning of meditation within Christian communities. We will also practice meditation during various parts of each session.

We will meet on January 12 at noon. We will decide together the best dates for the 2nd and 3rd classes. Contact Joel Mackey for further details and/or to sign up. Join us.

Practices of our Church Community – Ways to Join Us

Worship Service Each Sunday we gather at 10am to sing, pray, confess, and worship God together. We invite our community to participate in our worship services through singing, reading, praying, ushering, or sharing testimony. Do you like to write prayers or help connect music to themes in scripture? Talk with Di Pagel (Elder of Worship), Jake Fontana (Music Director) or Pastor Matt if you would like to help lead/design our worship services. You can also help us create space for conversation and building community through providing food during our coffee hour (11-12). Talk with Julia Marquez if you would like to contribute.



Food Ministry Each week, more than 40 volunteers share over 300 meals with our neighbors through our food ministry. Volunteers gather donated food on Fridays and Saturdays from local supermarkets and bakeries. Meals are prepared on Sundays and Mondays and are shared with neighbors and delivered to local encampments. We have opportunities to serve during the week, each Saturday, and Sunday. Talk with Gay Cobb or Dorothy Dugger or Nina Lapachet to get involved.



Bible Study Wednesday nights at 7pm via Zoom we gather around the sacred texts of scripture to study and reflect upon our lives and take new steps of faithfulness together. No need to study beforehand, just sign up for our weekly emails, click on the Zoom link and join conversation. Come with a desire to build community and listen for God's Spirit in the midst of scripture. Talk with Henry Gardner or Maggie Harmon or Pastor Matt for more details.



Building the Beloved Community Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. constantly spoke about God's work of building the beloved community - a community bridging across the differences of race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability. Building the Beloved Community is one lens we use to look at all of our ministry at First Church. We also host conversations, book groups, attend concerts and art shows, to learn, reflect, and to help us build God's beloved community within our church community, in our neighborhoods, and city. Talk with Suzie Inadomi, Pastor Matt or Pastor Joel to learn about ways to join BBC work at First Presbyterian Church of Oakland.



Community Life - God is community Three in one and we are made for community. Creating spaces for community around meals, discussion groups, backyard firepits, and outings together (A's game, beach etc.) are an important ministry within our church community. Do you like to host events, love connecting with others, enjoy building community? Talk with Julia Marquez or Pastor Matt and join them in planning our next community life events.



Faith in Action "Justice is what love looks like in the public." Cornel West. How do we put our faith into action to love our neighbors? One way we live out our faith is joining the ministries of Faith in Action East Bay, who for over 40 years have advocated and worked in areas of gun violence, immigration, education, housing, and equity in Oakland and the larger Bay Area. Members of First Pres. regularly join FIA Ceasefire night walks, advocate for affordable housing, and seek to support new structural changes for equity and justice. Talk with Pastor Matt to get involved and our new community organizer Chris Logan.



Next Steps in Building our Church Community

by Ben Baab

For over 100 years, First Presbyterian Church has worshipped God and served Oakland from the corner of Broadway and 27th St. In 1960, the campus expanded to include a multipurpose Fellowship Hall and classrooms. What is God guiding us to do with what we have inherited?

Trends and Challenges

Our society has changed in many ways during the last 60 years. Regular church attendance has declined for a wide range of reasons. Facilities have fallen into disrepair due to spiraling maintenance costs and dwindling financial resources. Yet, while the resources to respond to these challenges are decreasing, the needs of our neighbors continue to expand. For examples of these challenges and some strategies to meet them, consider reading the essays compiled by Mark Elsdon in *Gone for Good?: Negotiating the Coming Wave of Church Property Transition*. Be prepared to have some of your feelings about church spaces challenged.

Opportunities and Strategies

Even though the challenges may seem daunting, God calls us to love God and each other and gives us encouragement and tools to do God's will. The most obvious tool that we have is our location - close to housing, food, services, transportation, healthcare, and schools. Recent zoning changes may allow us to develop our property to a greater extent than was possible before. For guidance in considering options, review the advice available at the website of RootedGood.org.

Our facilities already serve a vibrant community. Our Sunday worship service, Godly Play, and fellowship hour provide essential spiritual practices and community time for our faith journeys. On Mondays, you will find hot meals being prepared and served. On Tuesdays,



More food is prepared and delivered to the neighborhood. On Wednesdays, lunches are made for the MACRO teams to provide to those in distress on our streets. Food Not Bombs cooks more food on Thursdays. On Fridays and Saturdays, donated ingredients are gathered from local grocery stores/bakeries and organized and meals are planned for Sunday and Monday. Also on Fridays, over 100 people visit the ReCares volunteers who collect and distribute medical equipment. Throughout the week, children, parents, and teachers enliven the Early Head Start classrooms, playground, courtyard, and Fellowship Hall. Many musicians rehearse in our spaces throughout the week, during the day and in the evenings. Habitat for Humanity, Cantare, and our own office personnel work to keep their organizations thriving. Oakland Gay Men's chorus, Cantare Con Vivo, Community Women's Orchestra, and others hold rehearsals weekday evenings.

Opportunities exist to collaborate more fully with our current mission partners and keep

supporting their important work. On a broader scale, we might consider partnering with Alameda County in supporting their Continuum of Care initiative, called EveryOne Home. Visit everyonehome.org to learn more about the initiative and think about ways we might help. A book published in October 2024 written by John Cleghorn, entitled *Building Belonging: The Church's Call to Create Community and House Our Neighbors*, merges themes related to Ben McBride's work, *Troubling the Waters*, on Belonging and Othering with the significant challenges of providing affordable housing.

Decisions

First Presbyterian has had several dedicated stewards of the building and grounds over the years - Judy Rowan, Di Pagel, Suzie Inadomi, Chris Weber, and Erick Bevington, to name a few. Chris and Erick, in particular, have drafted conceptual and technical plans to maintain, improve, and develop our campus. We are

now at a point where plans need to be finalized, decisions made, goals set, resources gathered, and work scheduled. In the next couple months, we hope to reach a consensus about our specific goals and priorities as they relate to worship, music, food, education, shelter, services/offices, and gathering spaces.

What can you do?

- Pray with us for guidance.
- Inform yourself about the issues - using suggestions listed here or others that you can find online.
- Observe the current weekly activities at First Presbyterian if you are not familiar with them.
- Participate in conversations with other community members and service providers.
- Share your thoughts, dreams, and opinions with Maggie, Pastor Matt, or Ben.
- Support the work to reach a consensus about the future God is calling us to help create.

Update on Antiracism Work from the Presbytery of San Francisco

In 2022, the Presbytery of San Francisco established a commission to conduct an internal Race Equity Audit. The goal of this work is to identify how systemic racism is embedded in presbytery structures and culture. The commission is named the Truth Commission for Race Equity or T-CARE for short. Linda Spencer from MPC has been serving as staff and as a volunteer with T-CARE. T-CARE is excited to report that they have completed a Draft Report with their findings. The report is relatively short (16 pages) and they hope you will find it readable. Their documentation and detailed analyses are in appendices. T-CARE is inviting folks to read their Draft Report and then attend a Conversation Circle to share your reactions. They want to bring the voices, experiences, and thoughts of people within our presbytery into their Final Report.

Upcoming Conversation Circles:

Tuesday, 1/7/25, 7 to 8:30 pm, via Zoom, in English with translations available, hosted by Rochelle Shaw, and co-facilitated by Rev Kamal Hassan and Noah Kruis (Crossroads)

Saturday, 1/11/25, 2 to 4 pm, in-person, Presbyterian Church in Chinatown, San Francisco. This session is part of the West Region Antiracist Group's meeting.

To register, please go to;
presbyteryofsf.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/2579500

Save the Date for our Fall Retreat: September 27-28, 2025



Join us at the beautiful Zephyr Point Presbyterian Center for a weekend of peace and joy. Please see Pastor Matt if you are interested in helping to plan the retreat.

First Church proudly supports our COMMUNITY PARTNERS:

- Afterglow Chorus
- Cantare Choirs
- Catalyst Youth Network
- College Awareness
- Community Women's Orchestra
- Downtown Streets Team
- Faith in Action East Bay
- Food Not Bombs
- Habitat For Humanity, East Bay-Silicon Valley
- Mandela Partners
- Oakland Civic Orchestra
- Oakland Early Head Start Preschool
- Oakland Gay Men's Chorus
- Oakland Kids First
- Quinteto Latino
- ReCares
- The Lucy Kinchen Chorale
- Vituity Care Foundation



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Elders

Elizabeth Cureton: Youth and Children
Chris Weber: Building and Grounds
Di Pagel: Worship and Music/Personnel
Gay Plair Cobb: Personnel/Food Ministry
Erick Bevington: Treasurer
Maggie Harmon: Finance
Julia Marquez: Community Life

Session Officers

Rev. Matt Prinz, Moderator
Anne Margaret Manay, Clerk
Erick Bevington, Treasurer

Deacons

Marjorie Witt, Barbara Goodroe, Derrick Polk,
Su Coburn, Pauline Ahanotu, Monrovia Prinz,
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Temple Tidings Contributors This Week

Writing by Matt Prinz, Ben Baab, Maggie Harmon
and Micheline La Mont. Photos by Suzie Inadomi.

Temple Tidings is a weekly publication. All are
welcome to contribute news, events and opinion.

Sign up to be on our email list: firstchurchoakland.org/temple-tidings